

Advice #1

Final Draft

From: Ron LaFayette, Chair, on Behalf of the Northgate Stakeholders Group
To: Mayor Greg Nickels and Members of the Seattle City Council

**Subject: STAKEHOLDERS ADVICE #1: OPEN SPACE AND DRAINAGE
OPTIONS FOR SOUTH LOT DEVELOPMENT**

The Northgate Framework Resolution directed that the Northgate Stakeholders Group be established to advise the City on four issues. This report outlines the response of the Stakeholders Group to three South Lot open space and drainage options presented to it by Seattle Public Utilities. This is an issue that some of the Stakeholders Group members have been involved with for several years.

The three options subject to SPU intensive review and to Stakeholder discussion are the **daylight, hybrid** and **natural system** options. (See attached description of the three options). The Northgate Framework Resolution did not ask the Stakeholders to examine a no action alternative, or consider alternative options beyond the three put before us. As we understand it, this is because large scale development such as that which is contemplated always requires that the City and developers make major changes to drainage systems, so that proper drainage can be secured and water quality improved. New drainage plans are the first step to Northgate area redevelopment. Thus, by the time the Stakeholders Group was convened, the City had already gained technical assistance, determined that major drainage work would be undertaken, and limited the choices to the three before us.

The purpose of the Stakeholders has been to advise SPU and the City regarding community responses to the daylight, hybrid, and natural space options, including values and criteria that can be utilized to help determine which would be most beneficial. **By a very wide majority, the members of Northgate Stakeholders Group prefer the hybrid option.** (Include actual results of June 3 vote). The process we utilized to arrive at this conclusion and additional comments on this advice are detailed below.

The Stakeholder Review Process:

Stakeholders participated in nine separate sessions (including six formal Stakeholder Group meetings) to review and discuss the information provided by SPU and to arrive at the Stakeholders Group recommendation:

- On March 18 and March 27, we received presentations from SPU on the analytical process it was using to evaluate the options.

- On April 10, most Stakeholders participated in a bus tour of the Northgate area, including the South Lot.
- On April 15, four Group members participated in a Brown Bag discussion with the SPU technical team which provided information on costs and the results of flooding analyses for the options under consideration
- On April 20, we received additional information from SPU. To aid in their deliberation, Group members further requested a glossary of terms; a three-dimensional rendering of the options; an accounting of costs of proposed cement retaining walls; and clearer information on water quality filtration and drainage benefits of each option. (Responses to each of these questions were provided in written form on May 11.) Individual Stakeholders Group members also introduced additional criteria for option review. These included educational, visual, aesthetic, cultural, and recreational impacts of each option, and level of community buy-in.
- On April 27, 13 Group members participated in a late afternoon meeting with SPU staff and consultants to hear the results of the water quality analysis of the options; a tour of stormwater treatments at other sites followed the presentation and discussion.
- On May 11, we received additional information on the natural system and hybrid options; continued to discuss values and criteria associated with distinguishing among the options; and took a straw poll indicating the very strong support for the hybrid proposal.
- On May 13, the City hosted and we participated in a Community Open House in which citizens viewed informational displays on the three options, heard from Stakeholder panels, and made written or oral comments. The community attendees participated in similar discussion processes regarding Lorig development plans and Northgate area transportation planning. With regard to South Lot Open Space and Drainage options, virtually all written and oral comments favored the hybrid option.
- On May 20, we completed our review of the three options and discussed the first draft of this report of our actions for transmission to the City and its citizens.
- On June 3, we approved the report.

Advice to the City:

Seattle Public Utilities asked three questions to help delineate the advantages and disadvantages of the three options under review. These questions related to the preferred depth of the open space from the surrounding streets; the desirability of maintaining year-round water flow from the site; and the relative merits of various types of water quality gains projected for the three options.

Our discussion of the relative merits of the three options focused around these values:

Moving water- The option selected should provide year-round flow of water. This would be provided by the daylight and hybrid options but not by the natural systems option.

Aesthetics- Related to the desire for moving water, the site should be aesthetically pleasing. As presented, all three options meet this test, though concern was expressed

whether the natural systems option would provide sufficient water to maintain plantings and vegetation.

Safety- The option selected should meet safety concerns. Relevant measures include maintaining medium grade embankments and providing sightlines from neighboring apartments. We believe that all three options can be constructed to meet safety concerns.

Pedestrian movement- The option selected should provide excellent access for pedestrians. We believe all three options can be constructed to do this.

Water quality- The option selected should have the greatest water quality benefits for the Thornton Creek watershed, within reasonable cost constraints. We believe the hybrid option is superior to the other two options in its water quality impact in that it removes the most pollutants, largely because it treats ~~((from))~~ drainage from ~~((over))~~ a much larger portion of the Northgate sub-basin.

In our judgment, the hybrid option performs well in the context of these values. We recommend its adoption. Our recommendation is based upon the expectation that the Mayor and City Council will develop cost control processes that will guarantee that this hybrid option can be completed at or near the cost figures that have been estimated.

Minority Opinion

The Majority Opinion indicates SPU asked the Stakeholders Group for advice regarding the daylight, hybrid and natural space options. The Northgate Framework Resolution (Ordinance 30642) does not explicitly call for the Stakeholders to provide such advice, though it does call for the Stakeholders to advise the City (not SPU) on planning for large lot developments, particularly early conceptual site planning (Section 13). The Ordinance directs OPM and DPD to engage in coordinated planning with citizens and interest groups within the Northgate community on coordinated site design and planning for the South Lot. Issues requiring coordination include, “the potential for a contiguous open space that allows for future potential daylighting of Thornton Creek” (Section 12). SPU (not the Stakeholders) is directed to evaluate three schemes for integrating Lorig’s development with open space and natural drainage: (1) daylighting, (2) natural drainage system and (3) hybrid (Section 12). The Ordinance never asks the Stakeholders to consider which of these schemes is preferable.

The Minority is concerned that the City will interpret the Stakeholders’ endorsement of the hybrid option as though the Stakeholders were asked to consider the question: should the City daylight the Creek at some point in the future? Viewing the Majority Opinion in this light it appears that a huge percentage of the community favors daylighting the Creek. Clearly the Stakeholders favor the hybrid option over daylighting or NDS. However, the Minority believes that the Stakeholders Group and the community have not been provided sufficient information to evaluate whether daylighting a prudent use of public funds and regrets that the Stakeholders were not asked to evaluate this question.

The Minority believes the City should view the response from the Stakeholders as, “if we were forced to choose between one of these three options, we would pick the hybrid.” If

DPD – Northgate Stakeholders Group
June 3, 2004 Final Advice #1 with Minority Report
Stakeholders Advice #1: Open Space and Drainage Options

the City intended the Stakeholders to consider whether or not the City should daylight the South Lot, another group should be convened because the question was not considered.

Suggested Amendments to Majority Opinion

Note for discussion: John Lombard's proposed revisions to the Majority Opinion are shown at the top of page 3.

Process Recommendation for Groundrules Regarding Advice

Recommendation from John Lombard:

While I think ultimately we must let minority opinions be expressed and decided by the minority they represent, we all have an interest in their characterizing our process fairly and accurately, particularly on issues that are not directly addressed in the majority advice. I hope we can accept that as one of our groundrules, recognizing that all of us may be in the minority at some point.

Recommendation from Debbie Fulton:

I agree that we need to develop ground rules regarding minority reporting and I think that one of the rules should be that the group has had an opportunity to respond to any concerns raised by a minority report. This is not intended as a comment on Kevin's report as he's pretty much the guinea pig here, but I could see interest groups in the future using minority reports to get statements into the record without group process or comment.